

SUPPORTING THE MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF OUR TROOPS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, last week, Members of this House were given a chance to put some real action behind the slogan, "Support the Troops," because one of the spending votes that we had before us included a provision to support the 21st Century Veterans Bill of Rights.

This Bill of Rights will restore full, 4-year college scholarships to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars to help make these troops, these soldiers part of an economic recovery like the veterans of World War II.

The first 2 years of the new GI Bill would cost what we spend in 2 days in Iraq. Imagine that. We could provide our veterans with 2 years of the GI Bill for 2 days of what we spend in Iraq. And yet some folks here in the House could not bring themselves to support the provision. All I can say is, what does that say to our brave men and women in uniform?

Veterans who have sacrificed for our country deserve to receive our Nation's support. The administration sent them to Iraq, and because they are vigilant and dedicated, very few of us standing here today serving in the U.S. House of Representatives or Senate have sent our sons and daughters over there.

□ 1800

We haven't had to watch our kids be killed or wounded.

And we must not let our troops down. A prime example of letting them down comes from one of our Nation's top research arms, the National Institute of Mental Health. In a recently released report, the Institute found that the number of suicides among veterans of the wars of Iraq and Afghanistan may exceed the combat death toll because of inadequate mental health care. According to the Director of Community Mental Health Centers, hobbled by financial limits, haven't provided enough scientifically sound care, especially in rural areas.

We've lost more than 4,000 of our Nation's bravest to deadly attacks in Iraq alone. How can a nation stand by while we lose that many men and women to suicide? It is unbelievable that we would be allowing this to happen.

According to a report by the Rand Corporation, soldiers who have been exposed to combat trauma were the most likely to suffer from depression or post-traumatic stress disorder. About 53 percent of soldiers sought treatment during the past year; half of those who received care were judged by Rand researchers to have gotten inadequate treatment. That means about three-quarters of those in need of mental health assistance are going without or are receiving inadequate treatment. Is that how a grateful nation shows its appreciation?

Meeting the needs of our returning troops should be how we show our appreciation, and it should be paramount in our fiscal deliberations. But we can go one step further. We can bring our troops home. We can reject the administration's call to send more troops into the theater. Once we fully fund the safe and orderly redeployment of our troops and military contractors, we can focus our efforts on the men and women walking with hidden wounds, the wounds of PTSD.

I urge my colleagues to reject a blank check for the administration's endless occupation of Iraq. When the House receives the Senate-passed supplemental, we must oppose any bill that does not truly support our troops. We must oppose any spending that is not dedicated to redeploying our soldiers home to their families.

We must bring our troops home. We must end the occupation of Iraq. And we must provide the troops with the care and services they need. We must show them just how much we appreciate their service.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TANKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I come to the House floor late this afternoon to express my concern with the United States Air Force's decision to award the \$35 billion contract to build the next generation of aerial refueling tankers to a foreign-led consortium of companies over a proposal put forth by American-based Boeing.

As I stand here today, Americans across the country are hopefully receiving in the mail our effort to stimulate the U.S. economy, that \$600 check. Why, during this time when we're trying to address the issue of our economy and create jobs, is our government outsourcing a multi-billion dollar tanker contract to a foreign company instead of creating those jobs here in America?

The Air Force's selection of European Aeronautic Defence and Space will lead to about 19,000 aerospace jobs in Europe. This decision has a significant impact, of course, in my home State of Kansas. Boeing's finishing and test center for tankers would take place in Wichita. Throughout the State, local suppliers would provide support services and parts for Boeing. In Kansas alone, Boeing's proposal would create or sustain 3,800 jobs and \$145 million annually, important in-

vestments that Europe now stands to gain.

Not only is the Air Force's decision a blow to American jobs, it's bad for our servicemembers and bad for the American taxpayer. Now that we've had a chance to look at the Air Force's analysis, we see how badly flawed the tanker selection competition was. The result is that the Air Force chose a tanker that is higher cost, higher risk, less capable, less survivable, and less efficient.

Boeing has filed a protest with the Government Accountability Office. I have listened to the explanation of the Air Force and the Department of Defense officials and I remain unconvinced that this was a fair competition. And so we now eagerly await GAO's results later this summer.

In the meantime, the Air Force's decision has raised questions that Congress should address. How does this decision impact America's economic security? How does it impact our military security? What are the national security effects of outsourcing critical military work to France and other foreign countries that often oppose our country's foreign policy? Should the Department of Defense's procurement process take into account billions of WTO-disputed foreign subsidies that give foreign manufacturers heavily weighted advantage in these competitions?

Air Force refueling tankers allow our military to operate around the world. In this day and age, the importance of modernizing our aging tanker fleet with the best available option cannot be overstated. In the coming weeks and months, I urge my colleagues in Congress to work to ensure that the right choice is made for Americans and America's military men and women.

BRING OUR TROOPS HOME

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express my disappointment with the votes we took last week on Iraq. There were some provisions in the amendment that I voted against that I strongly support, including the ban on torture and the requirement for sufficient rest time for our troops between deployments.

I helped lead the effort in this House to prohibit the administration from establishing permanent military bases in Iraq. I have been outspoken on the failure of previous Congresses to hold private contractors accountable and to punish waste, fraud and profiteering. But last week I could not vote for these provisions because the amendment did not include a firm, responsible deadline to bring our troops safely home.

Let me be clear: Any funding bill that does not contain a binding deadline to end this war is an open-ended commitment to continue it. That's